



A PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Eat Well, Feel Light

99 Small Habits for a Healthier Weight — No Diet Required

Eat Well, Feel Light

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Before You Start

This is not a diet book. Diets ask you to change everything at once, and that is why they fail. This book asks you to change one small thing, keep it, and then change another. Ninety-nine of them are here. You will not need all of them. Twenty that fit your life will do more than a hundred that don't.

With age, weight behaves differently. Muscle drifts away unless you keep it, which lowers the amount of food the body needs each day. Sleep gets lighter, and poor sleep drives appetite. Life gets more sedentary without anyone deciding it should. None of this means the situation is hopeless. It means the old approaches, eating less and hoping, do not work as well as they used to, and a gentler, steadier approach works better.

The habits here fall into nine groups: how to think about it, breakfast, lunch and dinner, snacks and sweets, drinks, the kitchen, movement, sleep and stress, and eating out. Read the whole book once, mark the ten habits that seem easiest, and start with three. When those are automatic, add three more.

A word about your doctor

If you have diabetes, heart or kidney disease, take medication that affects appetite or blood sugar, or have been told to follow a particular diet, talk with your doctor before changing how you eat. A healthy weight is about strength and comfort, not a number on a scale, and your doctor can help you set the right target.

Start Here

Eleven ways to think about it that make everything easier

Most people who struggle with their weight are not short on willpower. They are using willpower where a habit should be. These first eleven ideas are about setting things up so that the easy choice and the good choice are the same one.

- 1 Aim for strong, not skinny.** The goal is a body that carries you well: legs that manage stairs, a back that lifts the grandchildren. Losing muscle to lose pounds makes life harder, not easier. Every habit here protects muscle while trimming what you don't need.
- 2 Change one thing.** Pick a single habit from this book and keep it for two weeks before adding another. One habit kept beats ten habits attempted.
- 3 Never go hungry.** Hunger is not a virtue; it is a signal that the next meal will be too big. Eating enough protein and fiber at regular times keeps hunger quiet and overeating rare.
- 4 Think in weeks, not days.** One large dinner changes nothing. A pattern of them does. Judge yourself by the week, and let the odd day go.
- 5 Weigh yourself once a week, or not at all.** Daily weighing shows water, not fat, and it discourages people. Same day, same time, once a week, and look at the trend over a month. Or skip the scale and judge by how your clothes fit and how the stairs feel.
- 6 Use the plate, not the calculator.** Half vegetables, a quarter protein, a quarter starch, a little fat. Counting calories works for a few weeks; the plate works for life.

- 7 Expect slow.** A pound or two a month, kept off, adds up to twenty pounds in a year that you will never see again. Fast losses come back fast.
- 8 Eat with your eyes open.** No screen, no newspaper, no standing at the counter. People who pay attention to a meal eat less of it and enjoy it more.
- 9 Plan the hard hour.** Everyone has a time of day when resolve gives out: four in the afternoon, nine at night. Know yours, and decide in advance what you will eat then. A planned snack beats an unplanned raid.
- 10 Keep the kitchen honest.** You will eat what is in the house. Most of the habits in this book are easier if the cookies simply are not there.
- 11 Forgive quickly.** A missed walk or a second helping is not a failure; it is Tuesday. The habit that matters most is getting back to the plan at the next meal, not the next Monday.

Breakfast

The meal that decides how the rest of the day goes

A breakfast of toast and coffee is mostly starch and caffeine, and by ten o'clock it has worn off. Protein in the morning changes the whole day: less snacking, a smaller lunch, steadier energy. These eleven habits are about getting it right without spending more than ten minutes.

- 12 Put protein first.** Eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, leftover chicken, a can of sardines on toast. Aim for a palm-sized portion. It is the single most effective change most people can make.
- 13 Keep eggs boiled and ready.** Boil six on Sunday. Two with a piece of fruit is a breakfast that holds you until noon, and it takes no time at all.
- 14 Make oats work harder.** Plain oats are fine but fade fast. Stir in Greek yogurt or a spoon of peanut butter, add berries and a few nuts, and it becomes a meal.
- 15 Read the cereal box.** Many “healthy” cereals carry as much sugar as a dessert. Look for under 6 grams of sugar and at least 4 grams of fiber per serving, and add protein alongside.
- 16 Drink water before coffee.** A full glass on waking. Thirst after a night’s sleep is often read as hunger an hour later.
- 17 Have a real breakfast, not a big one.** Skipping breakfast to save calories usually ends in a large, fast lunch. A modest, protein-rich breakfast keeps the day steady.
- 18 Keep fruit whole.** An orange has fiber that slows its sugar; a glass of orange juice does not. Eat the fruit, drink the water.

- 19 Add a green to the eggs.** A handful of spinach, a few cherry tomatoes, some chopped peppers. It adds volume, fiber and vitamins for almost no calories.
- 20 Use the same three breakfasts.** Decision fatigue makes people reach for toast. Pick three breakfasts you like and rotate them. Variety can come at dinner.
- 21 Beware the pastry with the coffee.** A muffin or a scone is a slice of cake. If you want one, enjoy it on a Saturday as the treat it is, not as breakfast on a Tuesday.
- 22 Take your moringa before it.** If you take moringa capsules, the glass of water twenty minutes before breakfast is the natural moment. It pairs the habit with one you already keep.

Lunch and Dinner

Building meals that satisfy without stuffing

The main meals are where the half-quarter-quarter plate does its quiet work. These habits are about portions, order and the small adjustments that let you eat well, feel full, and still leave the table a little lighter than you sat down.

- 23 Vegetables first.** Start every main meal with the vegetables or salad on the plate, then the protein, then the starch. You will be fuller by the time you reach the potatoes and take less of them.
- 24 Use a smaller plate.** A nine-inch plate instead of an eleven-inch one. The same helping looks generous, and most people eat a fifth less without noticing.
- 25 Serve at the stove, not the table.** When the serving dishes stay in the kitchen, second helpings require a decision and a walk. Most of the time, you will decide against.
- 26 Wait ten minutes before seconds.** Fullness arrives about twenty minutes after you begin. If you still want more after a ten-minute pause and a glass of water, have a little. Usually you won't.
- 27 Make half the plate colorful.** Two vegetables at dinner rather than one. Frozen mixed vegetables, a bagged salad, roasted anything. Color is fiber, and fiber is fullness.
- 28 Cook once, eat twice.** Double the soup, the chili, the roast chicken. Tomorrow's lunch is then a good meal rather than whatever is nearest.
- 29 Watch the sauces, not the food.** A chicken breast is a chicken breast. The cream sauce, the sweet glaze and the pool of dressing are where the surprise calories live. Use them, but use a spoon, not a ladle.

- 30 Beans twice a week.** A cup of beans or lentils at a meal adds protein and fiber for very little money, and it fills you up for hours. Chili, lentil soup, a bean salad, black beans in a taco.
- 31 Fish twice a week.** Salmon, sardines, trout, tuna. Oily fish is filling, kind to the heart, and quick to cook. A tin of sardines on a salad is a two-minute lunch.
- 32 Eat dinner earlier.** A dinner finished by seven leaves the evening for digestion rather than another meal. If your family eats late, make it the smaller meal of the day.
- 33 Stop at satisfied, not full.** There is a moment in every meal when you are no longer hungry but could keep going. That is the moment to put the fork down. It takes practice, and it is the most useful skill in this book.

Snacks and Sweets

Keeping the pleasures without losing the plot

Nobody keeps a way of eating that has no pleasure in it. The habits here are not about giving up sweets. They are about making them deliberate, small and enjoyed, instead of automatic, large and barely noticed.

- 34 Snack on protein and fiber.** A boiled egg, a piece of cheese with an apple, a handful of nuts, Greek yogurt, hummus and carrots. A snack that is all starch or sugar makes you hungrier within the hour.
- 35 Portion nuts by the handful, not the bag.** Nuts are wonderful and dense. A small handful is a snack; the bag on the sofa is a meal you did not notice.
- 36 Have dessert on purpose.** Decide when you will have something sweet, a couple of times a week, and enjoy it slowly at the table. A treat chosen is worth ten eaten from the packet standing up.
- 37 Make fruit the everyday sweet.** Berries, a sliced pear, an orange, a bowl of melon. Sweet enough for most evenings, with fiber and water built in.
- 38 Keep dark chocolate, not milk.** Two squares of dark chocolate after dinner satisfy most people. A bar of milk chocolate does not, because it is engineered not to.
- 39 Never eat from the container.** Put it in a bowl. Sit down. Then eat it. The extra step is where the decision lives.
- 40 Ask whether you are thirsty.** Cravings between meals are often thirst wearing a disguise. A glass of water and ten minutes settles the question.

- 41 Brush your teeth after dinner.** It sounds silly. It works. The clean-mouth feeling, and the small effort of undoing it, ends most evening grazing.
- 42 Keep the crinkly foods out of sight.** If chips and cookies live in the house, keep them in a cupboard you have to open, not on the counter. Better still, buy them one at a time when you want one.
- 43 Watch the “healthy” snacks.** Granola bars, trail mix, dried fruit, flavored yogurt and smoothies from a shop are often sugar in a green wrapper. Read the label; treat them as treats.
- 44 Plan the four o’clock snack.** The afternoon slump is where most days go wrong. A glass of water, a walk to the mailbox, and a planned snack with protein takes the decision out of it.

Drinks

The calories nobody counts

Drinks are the easiest place to trim, because the body barely registers liquid calories as food. A person who swaps two sweet drinks a day for water can lose a noticeable amount in a year without changing a single meal.

45 Make water the default. A glass with every meal and one between. Keep a bottle where you sit. Many of us are mildly dehydrated most of the time, and it reads as hunger and fatigue.

46 Retire the soda. Regular soda is sugar water. Diet soda keeps the taste for sweet alive. Sparkling water with a squeeze of lemon or lime keeps the fizz and drops the rest.

47 Take coffee plain, or nearly. A splash of milk is fine. A flavored coffee drink from a shop can carry the calories of a slice of cake. Drink it as a rare treat, not a daily habit.

48 Drink your tea, not your sugar. Sweet tea by the pitcher is one of the biggest hidden sources of sugar in the American diet. Brew it unsweetened, add lemon and mint, and let your taste adjust for two weeks.

49 Eat the fruit, skip the juice. Juice is fruit with the fiber removed and the sugar left in. Even the pure kind. Save it for a small glass on special mornings.

50 Be honest about alcohol. A glass of wine is a pleasure. Two a night is roughly a meal's worth of calories a week, and it also loosens the resolve at dinner. Keep several alcohol-free days each week.

51 Try soup as a starter. A cup of broth-based soup before a meal fills the stomach with water and vegetables and reliably shrinks what comes after.

- 52 Milk counts as food.** A glass of milk is a reasonable snack, with protein and calcium. It just should not be treated as a drink between meals on top of everything else.
- 53 Warm drinks in the evening.** Herbal tea, warm water with lemon, a cup of hot milk. They settle the evening, keep hands busy, and replace the habit of something sweet.
- 54 Water before the walk, water after.** Movement works better hydrated, and the glass afterward stops the after-walk snack from turning into a second lunch.
- 55 Check the “water” label.** Vitamin waters, flavored waters and sports drinks are often sweetened. Unless you are running a marathon, plain water does everything they claim.

The Kitchen

Shopping, cooking and setting the house up to help you

The kitchen decides more than willpower ever will. A kitchen stocked with real food and arranged so that the good choice is the easy one does most of the work of this book on its own.

- 56 Shop with a list, after a meal.** A hungry shopper buys the cart the store wants. Eat first, write the list, and shop the edges of the store where the real food lives.
- 57 Keep the freezer full of vegetables.** Frozen spinach, peas, broccoli, mixed vegetables. As nutritious as fresh, no waste, and a good dinner is always ten minutes away.
- 58 Stock the protein shelf.** Eggs, canned tuna and sardines, canned beans, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, frozen fish. When protein is easy, meals are easy.
- 59 Buy fruit that is ready to eat.** Apples, bananas, oranges, grapes. Fruit that needs peeling, cutting or ripening tends to go soft in the bowl while the cookies get eaten.
- 60 Move the treats up high.** What is at eye level gets eaten. Put fruit and nuts where the cookies were, and the cookies on the top shelf in an opaque container.
- 61 Prepare vegetables on shopping day.** Wash the lettuce, chop the carrots and peppers, and put them in clear containers at the front of the refrigerator. You will eat what you can see.
- 62 Learn five dinners you can make without thinking.** A sheet-pan roast, a big soup, an omelet with a salad, a stir-fry, a bean chili. Five reliable meals cover a week and end the nightly “what shall we eat?”

- 63 Cook with olive oil, measured.** Good fat makes vegetables taste like something. A tablespoon in the pan is plenty; a free pour is a hundred calories nobody tasted.
- 64 Season generously.** Garlic, lemon, herbs, chili, vinegar, mustard, spices. Flavor is free, and flavorful food satisfies with less.
- 65 Use smaller bowls and glasses.** The same trick as the smaller plate. A small bowl of ice cream looks full; the same scoop in a big bowl looks mean, and you add more.
- 66 Clear the counter.** A counter with a fruit bowl and a water pitcher on it invites one thing. A counter with a bread box and a cookie jar invites another.

Movement

Keeping the muscle that keeps the weight off

Exercise alone rarely takes weight off; it takes a great deal of walking to burn a slice of cake. What movement does is keep the muscle that sets your daily needs, steady your blood sugar and appetite, and lift the mood that decides what you eat. The habits here are modest on purpose.

67 Walk after meals. Ten minutes after lunch and dinner. It helps the body handle the meal, blunts the after-meal slump, and adds up to nearly two and a half hours a week without ever feeling like exercise.

68 Do the chair routine twice a week. Sit-to-stands, wall push-ups, heel raises, marching in place. Ten minutes. It protects the muscle that keeps your metabolism from drifting down.

69 Count steps loosely. A pedometer or a phone will tell you what you do now. Add five hundred steps a week until you are around seven or eight thousand. More is fine, but that range does most of the good.

70 Stand up every hour. Sitting for long stretches slows the body's handling of sugar and fat, whatever else you do. Stand, stretch, walk to the window, once an hour.

71 Carry the groceries. Parking farther away, carrying rather than wheeling, taking the stairs: incidental movement is the movement that survives busy weeks.

72 Garden, and count it. Digging, raking, carrying pots and bending to weed are real work. An hour in the garden is an hour of exercise that happens to grow tomatoes.

- 73 Find a walking partner.** People who walk with someone walk more often, walk further and keep it up longer. A neighbor, a spouse, a dog, a phone call with a friend while you both walk.
- 74 Move first thing.** Two minutes of stretching, marching or a short walk before breakfast sets the day's tone and gets daylight into your eyes, which helps you sleep tonight.
- 75 Do something you like.** Dancing, swimming, bowling, tai chi in the park, a bicycle. The best exercise is the one you will still be doing in five years.
- 76 Don't eat back the walk.** A walk earns you a walk, not a pastry. The reward is how you feel afterward, and it is a better one.
- 77 Rest when you are hurt, not when you are tired.** Mild stiffness eases with gentle movement. Sharp pain is a stop sign. Learn the difference, and ask your doctor when unsure.

Sleep and Stress

The two things that quietly control appetite

A short night makes the body hungrier the next day and pulls it toward sugar and starch. Stress does the same, and adds a reason to eat that has nothing to do with hunger. Fix these two, and many of the food habits become easier without trying.

78 Protect seven hours. Poor sleep raises the hunger hormones and lowers the fullness ones. A well-slept person simply wants less. Treat bedtime as part of the plan.

79 Keep the same waking time. A steady morning anchors the body clock better than a steady bedtime. Weekends included.

80 Stop caffeine by noon. Caffeine lingers for hours, and longer as we get older. If nights are restless, move the last cup to morning and give it two weeks.

81 Finish eating three hours before bed. A full stomach at bedtime disturbs sleep and rarely gets used for anything except storage.

82 Dim the evening. Bright screens and overhead lights tell the brain it is noon. Lamps, a book, a warm drink. The body will start winding down on its own.

83 Name the feeling before you eat. Tired, bored, lonely, anxious and hungry all feel similar at nine at night. Ask which one it is. Only one of them is fixed by food.

84 Take the walk instead. When stress sends you to the kitchen, go out the door instead. Ten minutes outside changes the mood faster than anything in the pantry.

85 Breathe for a minute. In for four counts, out for six, a dozen times. It lowers the stress response that drives cravings. It also works at three in the morning.

- 86 Keep a small pleasure that is not food.** A crossword, a phone call, a chapter of a novel, a bath. When the evening needs a reward, have one ready that is not in the refrigerator.
- 87 See people.** Loneliness is a powerful driver of comfort eating. A weekly meal with friends, a club, a volunteer morning, church, a class. Company is part of the plan.
- 88 Rest is not failure.** A tired day is a day for an early night, not a day for pushing harder. Tomorrow, rested, the habits come easily again.

Eating Out and Special Occasions

Enjoying the table without undoing the week

Restaurants, holidays, church suppers and family dinners are where the best of life happens. They are not the enemy. These last eleven habits let you enjoy every one of them and still be the person who is steadily getting stronger and lighter.

- 89 Look at the menu before you go.** Deciding at the table, hungry, with the bread basket in front of you, is how the fried platter gets ordered. Decide at home.
- 90 Send the bread back, or share one piece.** The basket is the meal before the meal. One good piece with butter, savored, is a pleasure. Three, absently, is a mistake.
- 91 Order a vegetable to start.** A salad or a broth soup first fills the plate in your stomach with what should be there, and the main course shrinks on its own.
- 92 Ask for the sauce on the side.** Restaurant portions of dressing and sauce are enormous. On the side, you use a spoonful and get all the flavor.
- 93 Box half before you begin.** Most restaurant mains are two meals. Ask for a box with the food and put half away before the first bite. Tomorrow's lunch is solved.
- 94 Share dessert.** Two spoons, one plate. The first three bites are where all the pleasure is anyway.
- 95 Drink a glass of water for every glass of wine.** It slows the wine, keeps you hydrated, and halves the next morning.

- 96 At the buffet, walk the whole line first.** Then take one plate, with the things you actually want, and sit down. The second lap is where buffets win.
- 97 Bring a dish to gatherings.** A big salad, a vegetable tray, a bean dish. It guarantees there is one thing on the table that fits the plan, and other people are always grateful.
- 98 Eat before the party.** A small protein snack an hour before means you arrive interested in the people rather than the cheese board.
- 99 Enjoy it, and go back to the plan tomorrow.** A holiday meal is a holiday meal. Have the pie. Then the next morning, water, a walk, and breakfast as usual. That is the whole secret, and it is why this book has no diet in it.